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**United States Proposes Greater Openness for WTO Disputes
Proposal Advances Discussions on Doha Agenda**

WASHINGTON-The United States today submitted a proposal to expand transparency and public access to World Trade Organization dispute settlement proceedings. The proposal would open WTO dispute settlement proceedings to the public for the first time and give greater public access to briefs and panel reports. The United States submitted the proposal in connection with the ongoing Doha Agenda negotiations taking place in Geneva to improve and clarify WTO dispute settlement rules.

"The United States has been the leader in advocating greater transparency at the WTO, and today's proposal reaffirms that leadership," said U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick. "WTO rules have brought tremendous benefits to U.S. farmers, workers and businesses. Public confidence in how those rules are enforced improves with greater openness. Today's proposal would open the door to the public, and thereby open the door to greater understanding and acceptance of the WTO."

In addition to open hearings, public briefs, and early public release of panel reports, the U.S. proposal calls on WTO members to consider rules for "amicus curiae" submissions - submissions by non-parties to a dispute. WTO rules currently allow such submissions, but do not provide guidelines on how they are to be considered. Such guidelines would provide a clearer roadmap for handling amicus submissions.

Today's proposal builds on past U.S. efforts and successes on transparency in WTO dispute settlement proceedings. In 2000, the United States was the first WTO member to post its dispute settlement briefs on its website (www.ustr.gov/enforcement/briefs.shtml) immediately upon submission. Several other WTO members now post their briefs as well, or otherwise make them publicly available shortly after submission. The United States also seeks in every dispute to obtain the agreement of the other party to open panel hearings to the public. In addition, the United States successfully argued in a 1998 WTO case that amicus submissions are permitted under current WTO rules.

Today's proposal is a first step in the efforts of the United States to work with other delegations

to improve the WTO dispute settlement system.

Background

The meeting of WTO trade ministers in Doha, Qatar in November 2001 called for negotiations to clarify and improve the WTO Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes. The U.S. proposal will be considered by the Special Session of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body, which is handling these negotiations.

Today's proposal is the first U.S. proposal in these particular negotiations. The United States will continue to work with other countries on other improvements to the DSU. The U.S. Proposal to Expand Transparency in WTO Disputes includes the following provisions:

Open hearings - The public could observe all substantive panel, Appellate Body and arbitration meetings, except those portions dealing with confidential information;

Timely access to submissions - All briefs and hearing statements would be made public, except those portions dealing with confidential information;

Timely access to final panel reports - Final panel reports would be made available to WTO members and the public once the reports are issued to the parties; and

Amicus curiae submissions - Consideration of guidelines to establish procedures for the handling of amicus submissions.